

Believe it or not, it's Ripley

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

What would you think are the vital ingredients you'd need to produce a fun, action-packed, run and gun platformer? A diverse arsenal of potent weaponry maybe? A vast army of progressively ferocious opponents? How about an appropriate licensed movie meat hook on which to hang the violent, speaker-bursting offering?

Aliens - the second film in the trilogy - would have been perfect fodder. It's the one in which Ripley pushes her recurring nightmares down to the pit of her stomach, against her better judgement, returning to exomoon LV-426 with an elite Colonial Marine unit. Under the illusion she's there to assist with the eradication of the xenomorphs believed to have re-inhabited the area now home to the terraforming colony, Hadleys Hope, Ripley soon comes to realise that she's been duped. Her employers, the Weyland-Yutani Corporation, intend to exploit her insight and expertise in order to gather alien specimens for use in the pursuit of developing biological weapons.



(the prisoners hesitate to go against the alien and ask why they can't wait for the company to bring them some guns)

Ripley: Because they won't kill it. They might kill you just for having seen it but they're not gonna kill it.

Aaron: That is crazy! That is horse s**t! They will not kill *us*!

Ripley: When they first heard about this thing, it was 'crew expendable'. The next time they sent in marines - they were expendable too. What makes you think they're gonna care about a bunch of lifers who found God at the

ass-end of space? You really think they're gonna let you interfere with their plans for this thing? They think we're - we're crud. And they don't give a f**k about one friend of yours that's - that's died. Not one.

Upon arrival obviously all plans of containment fly out the window...

"Shut that window, we're in *space!*", hollered Captain Light Entertainment.

When all hell breaks loose and the crew find themselves cocooned in alien goop, Plan A is brought into effect; exterminate! They make useless pets anyway - much like with Saint Bernards, you can never get that green acidic slobber out of the carpet.



Ripley encounters multiple aliens and has no shortage of heavy-duty countermeasures on hand with which to kick them into touch. So far so good in terms of gaming adaptation potential, except that Aliens (plural) was released in 1986 before the Mega Drive, proper gaming Amiga and SNES had been born. Promoting a video game based around an old blockbuster movie once all the hype-dust had settled

would constitute an uphill battle yielding minimal financial return, so Alien 3 (or *cubed*) would have to do.

Alien 3's main drawback is that it features only one (quadrupedal, the host being a dog/ox) xenomorph, and a dearth of weaponry designed this side of the stone age. Any defensive paraphernalia is improvised, sparse and risible when you consider the might of the intended target. It worked out rather well for Sigourney Weaver the gun control advocate, not so much for Ripley who isn't.

Ripley: This is a maximum-security prison, and you have no weapons of any kind?

Andrews: We have some carving knives in the abattoir, a few more in the mess hall. Some fire axes scattered about the place - nothing terribly formidable.

Ripley: That's all?

Andrews: We're on the honor system.

Ripley: Then we're f**ked.

If you recall Aliens' conclusion you'll know how Ripley came to find herself stranded upon Fiorina 'Fury' 161, a foundry facility and penal colony populated by unarmed degenerate lifers. A bedraggled congregation of criminals convicted for murder, rape, child-molestation, thieving (?) and so on, destined to spend the rest of their days toiling in a dilapidated industrial complex.

(Ripley gets out of bed naked)

Ripley: Wanna get me some clothes, or should I just go like this?

Clemens: Given the nature of our indigenous population, I would suggest clothes. None of them have seen a woman in years.

(under his breath)

Clemens: Neither have I, for that matter.

(Dillon saves Ripley from being raped by fellow inmates, beating them severely with a metal bar)

Dillon: Take off. I gotta 're-educate' some of the brothers! We're gonna discuss some matters of the spirit.



What keeps (some of) our criminal compadres motivated isn't a whip or otherwise armed guard, but "some sort of apocalyptic, millenarian, Christian fundamentalist, uh..."

religion and the assumed promise of god's second coming. Only *he* can mete out final judgement. A prison warden's dream job! Brian Glover should have looked permanently delirious.

Andrews: All scum. Just because they have taken on religion doesn't make them any less dangerous. I try not to offend their convictions. I don't want to upset the order. I don't want ripples in the water. And I don't want a woman walking around, giving them ideas...

"No one hated it more than me; to this day, no one hates it more than me." - Alien 3 director, David Fincher (interview with The Guardian, 2009)



It's the Alien movie many fans of the franchise would rather forget, so if it's all a blur, allow me to recap the route to David Fincher's (since disowned) continuation of the beloved sci-fi saga Ridley Scott made a cultural icon...

Having flame-throwered the alien queen's nest, destroying her eggs and ovipositor, Ripley, Hicks, Bishop and Newt

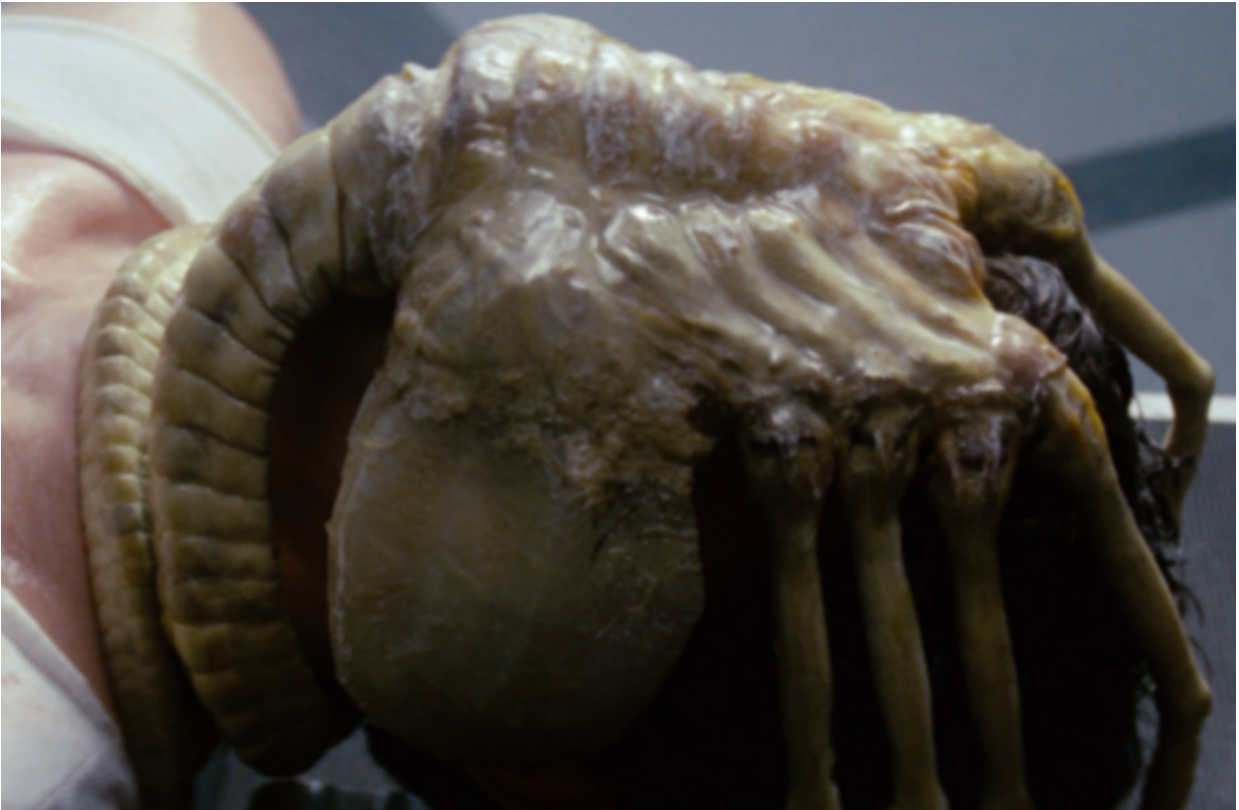
evacuate the erupting space station onboard the USS Sulaco. As the surviving crew prepare to enter hypersleep for their return hibernation trip to Earth they're ambushed by the queen who has deviously stowed away in the Sulaco's landing gear.



Don't worry, Ripley saw her coming; she isolates the xenomorph in an exosuit cargo-loader, expelling the unwanted parasite through an airlock into space. And breathe. It's enough to make any woman tear her hair out.

Alien 3 opens in the year 2179 with the crew still in cryonic stasis onboard the USS Sulaco. A fire breaks out causing the spaceship's automated systems to eject Ripley et al via an

escape pod. Before it crashlands on Fiorina 161 we note that a Facehugger also resides in one of the cryotubes, dropping a none too subtle clue that the alien slaver could be about to hit the fan all over again.



Andrews: Let me see if I have this correct, Lieutenant - it's an 8-foot creature of some kind with acid for blood, and it arrived on your spaceship. It kills on sight, and is generally unpleasant. And of course, you expect me to accept all this on your word.



Now 1992 in earth years the time was ripe for hopping onboard the franchise's sci-fi juggernaut. Swooping in to pick at the bones of Mirrorsoft's demise, Virgin acquired the rights to produce an accompanying Alien 3 game. Delegating the development duties to Probe/Eden Entertainment Software, they set out to turn the tide of duff Alien tie-ins.

An atmospheric, scrolling, run 'n' gun platformer was the upshot. No potential system *host* was left unhugged. Our Amiga variant was ported from the well-received lead Mega Drive title, and plays almost identically barring a slight deficit in speed. It's also celebrated for being one of a small selection of Amiga games to support a second fire button. For anyone who loathes 'up for jump' you'll be glad to know we've been allocated a dedicated joystick button to serve this task, while the space bar switches between weapons.

Obviously we assume the role of Ellen Ripley played by Sigourney Weaver. Did I have to mention that? Ripley didn't feature at all in the original draft of the movie so it wasn't

something that could be taken for granted. *Nothing* can with movie to game conversions.

"The main difference between the two is that in the movie Ripley spends most of her time weaponless, being pursued by the monster, while in the game she's armed to the teeth."

Probe coder, Tim Round (CU Amiga preview, September 1992)

What makes Alien 3 the game more unconventional still is that it's a hodgepodge of elements taken from all three movies that were out (or *almost* out) during its development. No more movies were produced beyond no. 3 anyway. Not in *my* world.

Ripley's shaven head is something inextricably linked with the third film (fleas are a problem in the penal colony so it had to go). Sigourney was paid a \$40,000 bonus to go bald.

All weapons and our motion tracker were adopted from Aliens.

"When we started work on the Mega Drive version nine months ago we had the scripts, storyboards and loads of photos for reference. It was obvious from the 'no weapons' clause, though, that the action scenes just weren't conducive to a decent arcade game - after all, what's the player going to do when they encounter the lone Alien and can't shoot it - run away?"

Probe coder, Tim Round (CU Amiga preview, September 1992)



Multiple frenzied E.T. threats are associated with Aliens.

Alien introduced the species' mythos and foreboding predatory tone of everything that followed.

Oppressive themed backdrops were replicated from Alien 3, as was the tweaked plot. Speaking of which...

"The Future is now...

The space ship Sulaco, which is carrying the cryotubes that Ripley, Newt and Hicks have been in a state of hypersleep within, is being propelled through space when a malfunction occurs.

In response to this malfunction, Sulaco's 'brain' ejects the EEV containing the cryotubes. We later find out that not only has the synthetic human, Bishop, been aboard as well, but an unborn Alien has also managed to infest itself within the body of Ripley.

As the Sulaco plummets helplessly through space, the EEV is hurled out of its hold and crashes on an isolated section of the mining planet and 'penal colony', Fiorina 161.

Upon impact, the EEV is seriously damaged, Newt and Hicks are dead. Bishop, the android, is reduced to negative capability, while Ripley is left unconscious but alive.

Fiorina 161 is inhabited by hardcore individuals, convicts serving time in this maximum security facility. These outcasts were left on the planet as a maintenance crew, unable to function in civilisation. They are joined by a medical officer, Clemens, and two supervisors.

Ripley, suspecting that aliens have followed her, searches for proof. She knows that 'The Company', considers the Aliens to be an important species and has ordered them not to be harmed. 'The Company' has millions of dollars invested in the 'Alien Retrieval Project' which would bring this strain of hideous killing machines back to earth to be used as 'weapons'.

Ripley now takes on her most important assignment. She must rescue the Aliens' captives, then find and destroy them.

That bump... is your heart... as you get to confront the Aliens!"

If only the movie moved at that pace it might have been more bearable. Instead, it becomes a suspense thriller similar to Jaws in that half the runtime is dedicated to speculation and discussion of the bogie monster. When the alien finally put in an appearance I'd already lost the will to live. It works in Jaws because we'd yet to see 'Bruce' and the sense of anticipation was genuine. You couldn't get away with it again in Jaws III.



It's not surprising that it drags, often losing focus since much of the movie was shot without a script and under the jurisdiction of the cluelessly meddling Twentieth Century Fox movie studio. Who *alienated* the key people involved with the talent to make Alien 3 a success.

Part 3 isn't a terrible film, it only seems that way faced with the insurmountable challenge of proceeding the first two. It also helps if you watch the 'Assembly Cut' rather than the original hacked to pieces theatrical cut which forgets that exposition and character development matters.

Alien 3 is carried by a stellar cast of consummate professionals, some of whom we sincerely mourn when they are prematurely culled. Ripley's rapidly unfolding relationship with prison doctor Clemens, played masterfully by Charles Dance, is peculiarly gripping. He's almost too rigid, overly formal and polite to be human, yet steered by Ripley's no-nonsense, assertive approach, a touching bond evolves.



Ripley: Are you attracted to me?

Clemens: In what way?

Ripley: In that way.

Clemens: Very direct.

Ripley: I've been out here a long time.

It's comfortably awkward such is the artful dexterity of both performances.



(Clemens rises after making love with Ripley)

Clemens: I really appreciate your affections. But I am aware that they deflected my question. In the nicest possible way, of course.

Clemens harbours a tragic past, which is delicately teased out of him as trust develops.

Ripley: How 'bout levelling with me? Well, when I asked how you got assigned here you avoided the question. And then when I asked about the prison ID tattooed on the back of your head you ducked me again.

Clemens: It's a long, sad story. And more than a little melodramatic.

Ripley: Try me.

Clemens: (smiles) If you insist. After my student years, despite the fact that I had become secretly addicted to morphine, I was considered to be most promising. A man with a future. Then during my first residency I did a thirty-six hour stretch on an ER. So I went out and I got more than a little drunk. Then I got called back. Boiler had blown on a fuel plant and there were thirty casualties. And eleven of them died. Not as a result of the accident but because I prescribed the wrong dosage of painkiller. And I got seven years in prison and my license reduced to a 3C.

(pause)

Clemens: At least I got off the morphine.

He shares while Ripley continues to hold back for fear of being dismissed as insane. Ruled by her deeply nurtured (entirely understandable) trust issues, establishing the truth is like cracking open a clamshell with a feather.

Clemens: Now that I've gone out on a limb for you with Andrews, damaged my already less-than-perfect relationship with that good man and briefed you on the humdrum history of Fury 161; can you not tell me what you were looking for in the girl?

Even when Clemens is mauled to death by the alien, Ripley displays no sense of loss, offering a fascinating insight into her beyond stoic disposition.

It's deliciously unHollywood, preparing us for the equally heretical, nihilistic finale. Which variation you see depends on the chosen cut, though neither are especially hopeful in the traditional sense. Fincher's middle name was 'bleak' at this early juncture of his blossoming career.



Prison warden Andrews, played by former wrestler Brian Glover, is as bombastic, overbearing and pompous as Clemens is restrained and sensitive. I didn't shed a single tear when he croaked, and that's also a testament to his ability to convey the abrasive sensibilities of the character. Brian died in July 1997 of a brain tumour... or was it?

Watching Andrews and Clemens bristle in each other's company whenever their diametrically opposed personalities clash is electric. Andrews has the superficial respect of the prisoners serving under his regime, though is clearly out of his depth with Clemens, who feigns subservience to maintain the status quo while deftly manipulating the meat-headed

commander. Never letting his guard down, Andrews remains suspicious, swallowing his resentment at being outgunned by Clemen's superior intellect, while powerless to truly control him. They both know that having a doctor on board is critical to the operation, and alternative candidates are hardly chomping at the bit to take on the role.



Sigourney Weaver is as compelling and kick-ass proficient as we've come to expect. When Andrews is slain it becomes undeniably apparent that the residents have no faith in his second in command, tauntingly known as '85'.

Ripley: What's this 'eighty-five' thing?

David: A couple of us sneaked a look at his personnel file the day he arrived. It's his IQ.

Aaron: (the inmates are trying to decide what to do next following Andrew's death) Okay, look, there's no way I can replace Andrews. He was a good man. I know you guys didn't appreciate him...

Dillon: Aaron, we don't wanna hear that s**t now.

After spiritual leader, Dillon, dismisses the suggestion that he should take up the responsibility, the inmates immediately look towards Ripley's authority. Quite a compliment considering she's an unwelcome outsider and also the lone female in a misogynist community. They must have watched Alien and Aliens!

Frank: Treat a queen like a whore and a whore like a queen. You can't go wrong.

Dillon isn't a character who's so easily pigeon-holed; a swirling contradiction of impenetrable traits and motivations.

Dillon: Why? Why are the innocent punished? Why the sacrifice? Why the pain? There aren't any promises. Nothing certain. Only that some get called, some get saved. She won't ever know the hardship and grief for those of us left behind. We commit these bodies to the void with a glad heart. For within each seed, there is a promise of a flower, and within each death, no matter how small, there's always a new life. A new beginning.

Seemingly playing the good Samaritan in saving Ripley from gang rape, earlier delivering a touching eulogy for the deceased travellers, he simultaneously rejects Ripley's

gratitude as though personally offended by her need for kinship.

Ripley: I just wanted to, uh, say thanks for what you said at the funeral. It was, uh...

My friends would have appreciated it.

Dillon: Yeah, well, you don't wanna know me, lady.

Dillon (played by Charles S. Dutton) is a complex, engaging character in his own right, though at his best when laying the groundwork for Ripley. After leading us to think he's just the kind of philanthropist guerilla you'd want fighting your corner in times of crisis, Dillon warns Ripley that he's not someone she'd want as a confidant.

Dillon: I'm a murderer and rapist of women.

Ripley: Really? Well, I guess I must make you nervous.

Totally unphased, Ripley calmly turns the tables, suggesting that Dillon must feel threatened by her presence. That if he became hostile, *Dillon* would be the one to suffer. A momentous scene that encapsulates Ripley beautifully; an unapologetic beacon of female empowerment who exudes self-assured tenacity and autonomy in the face of acute adversity.



Jump-scare sensibilities aside, Alien 3 explores some engrossing philosophical concepts without shirking its contractual obligations to fulfil Fox's dictated blockbuster credentials. To satisfy promises made by the trailer, Alien 3 embraces a raft of cutting edge, mostly practical special effects. True, some look ludicrously amateurish and unfinished, though not to the extent that they detract from the strikingly stylish cinematography and magnitude of Ripley's apocalyptic plight.

Hindsight, freedom from restrictive deadlines, and additional creative input have since redressed the balance. Another persuasive argument for sticking with the alternative Assembly Cut as it purges the worst examples of botched special effects, replacing them by way of restorative editing.

Given that the game developers (an unusually large team of 9) hadn't seen the final cut of the film when they began

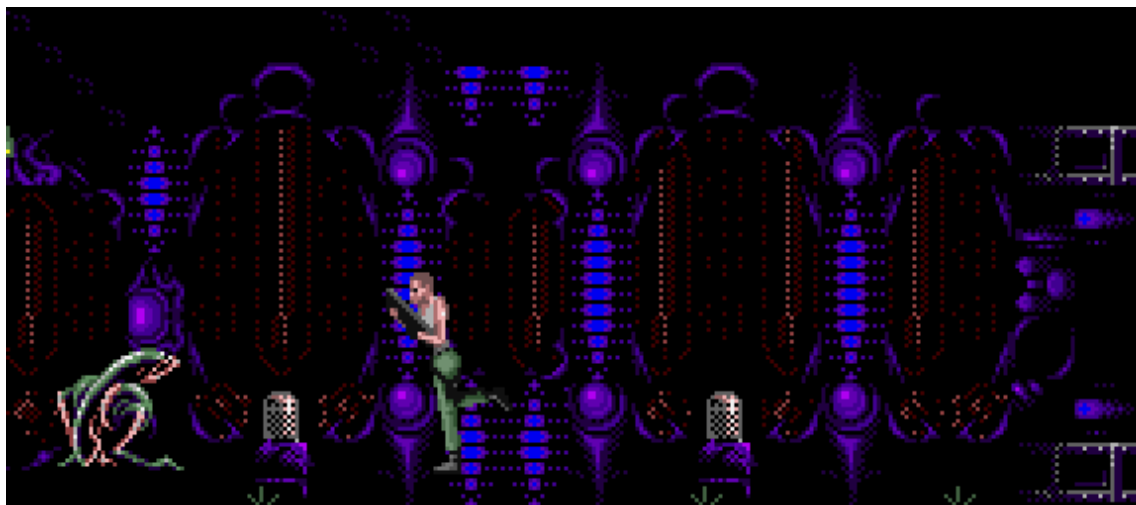
working on its adaptation, the aesthetics and ambience of the colony's claustrophobic environment and prowling antagonists are impressively accurate. Use your imagination and you barely notice the limitations imposed by the Amiga's 16 colour palette. Probe's efforts to replicate the visceral tension and sense of urgency that pervades the silver screen incarnation certainly haven't gone unnoticed.

Maybe Probe allowed themselves to be guided by the script we're informed was in a constant state of flux during filming.

"Actually, it was virtually complete. There were one or two minor alterations - such as the creature the Alien emerges from, for instance - but all the plot elements were there.

Considering that I only had pictures to go on and hadn't seen the film at the time of coding, I was really surprised at how close the game screens are to the real thing."

Probe coder, Tim Round (CU Amiga preview, September 1992)



Likewise, Ripley's determined stomp animation and the blink-and-you'll-miss-it kinetics of her adversaries have been

captured beautifully. Such nuances could easily have been gleaned from the movie's predecessors, though fortunately, as we learn from Tim, Probe/Eden weren't totally in the dark regarding the third entry in the Alien roll call.

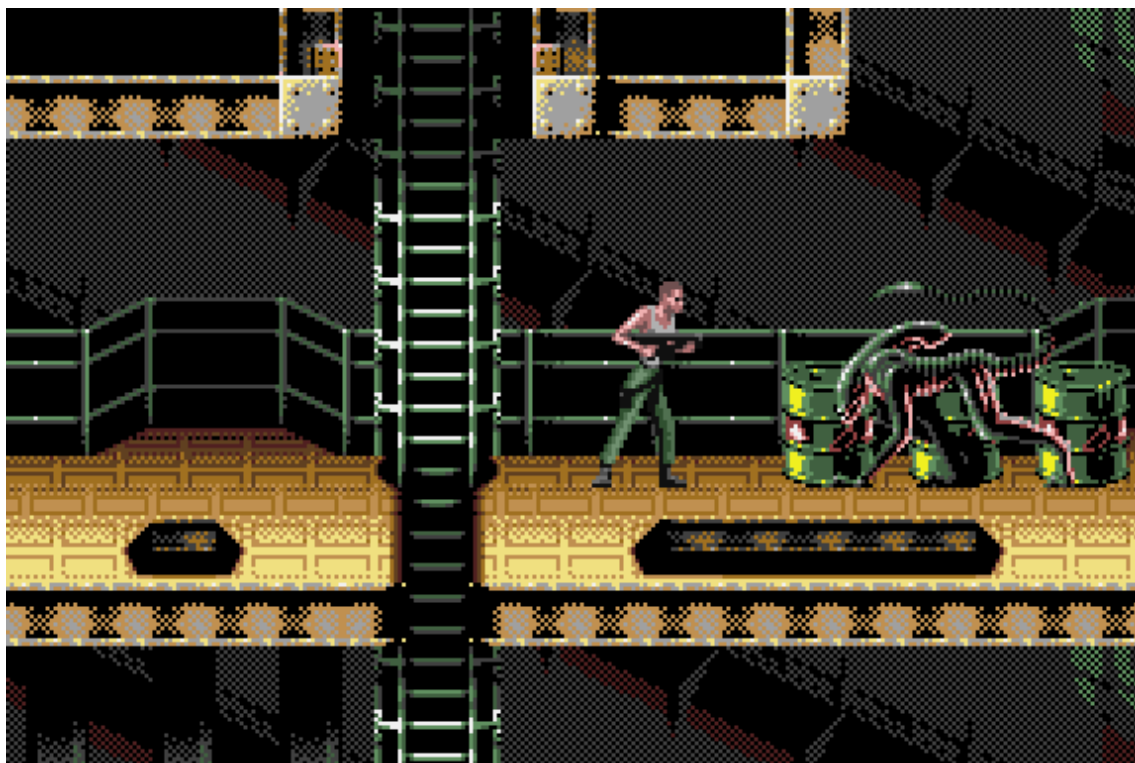
"It's not original by any means, but other platformers pale in comparison thanks to the dark moody graphics that generate such a spooky atmosphere.

Alien 3 is as good as the Mega Drive version and any Amiga-owning Alien fan is going to want to rush out to buy it.

I would heartily recommend it to anyone, but as it's basically a bog-standard platformer it comes down to personal preference. If you want a cutesy platform game take a peek at Superfrog, but if you want a violent, dark and moody one, then Alien 3 is definitely your cup of tea. Hudson, we are leaving.

Alien 3 is my kind of game. It features great atmospheric graphics, fairly decent sound, good playability and is packed with tons of violence. A bog-standard platformer, but it quite literally oozes atmosphere."

Amiga Computing (85%, June 1993)



Following a series of protracted delays, 22nd May 1992 marked the movie's US theatrical release date. By August it had made its way over the pond to UK cinemas. Our Amiga port wasn't far behind; on the shelves by November 1992 in time for the Christmas silly season while it was still hot-ish property. That was the plan, although most magazines didn't review Alien 3 until well into the new year, suggesting that the ETA likely slipped.

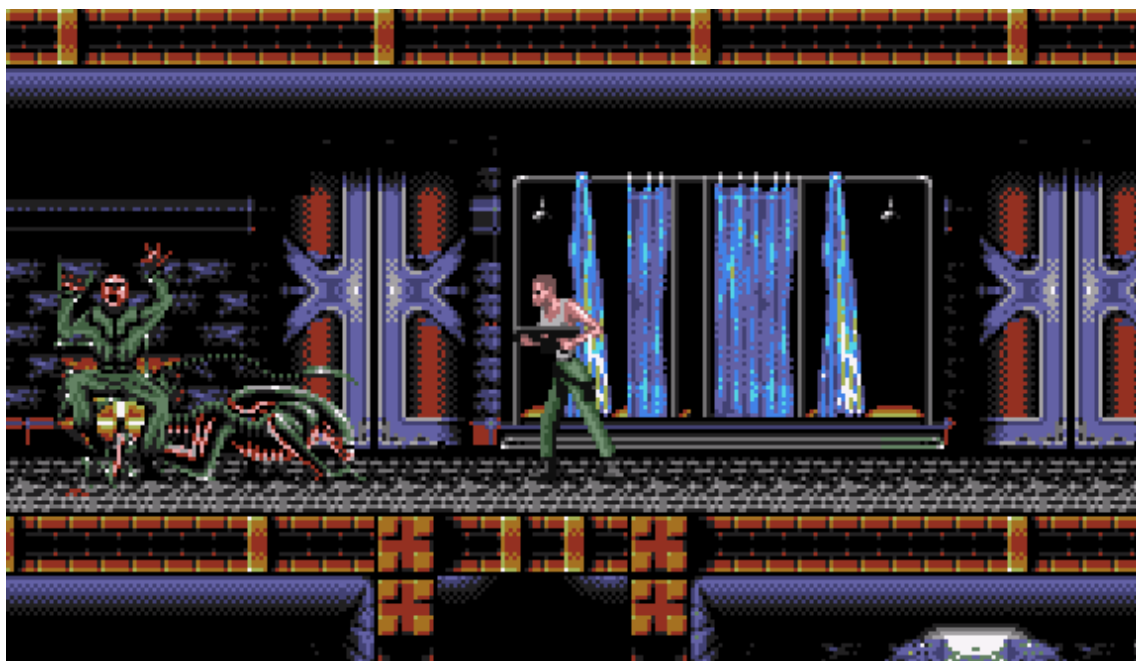
From a budget of \$50-55m (including Sigourney Weaver's \$5.5m fee), Alien 3 earned \$159.8m at the box office and has since been repackaged and milked several times. Can I interest you in a 'quadrilogy' of Aliens?

Missions kind of mirror the gist of the movie. These entail rescuing all captives, eliminating all aliens, or both simultaneously. Exits will only open once the brief has been accomplished. At which point a bonus is awarded for unused ammo. Haha - *unused* - haha!

Alien 3's real damsel in distress is civilisation beyond the remote prison's boundaries, though the inmates are the ones in immediate danger. Ironically Ripley is immune whilst she is nurturing the unborn alien foetus - the queen wouldn't jeopardise her future by harming the surrogate mother to her offspring.

Ripley: Don't be afraid, I'm part of the family.

In which case, why are we public enemy no. 1 in the game? A rhetorical question, or is it?



As the protagonist hero, it's our duty to save the prisoners... whether we think the psychopathic miscreants are worthy or not. Either way, in the movie they assist Ripley in executing her plan to incarcerate and freeze the alien so rescuing them is a necessary evil.

Dillon: You're all gonna die. The only question is how you check out. Do you want it on your feet? Or on your fuckin' knees... begging? I ain't much for begging!

Nobody ever gave me nothing! So I say *f**k* that thing!
Let's fight it!

As in the movie we're forever racing against the clock because it's only a matter of time before the aliens' wall-mounted prey are turned into xenomorph incubators. And you know what happens when they hatch. I mean besides us losing a life. Apparently Acclaim/Virgin were contractually obliged not to depict Ripley dying so this was their way of manoeuvring around the stipulation.

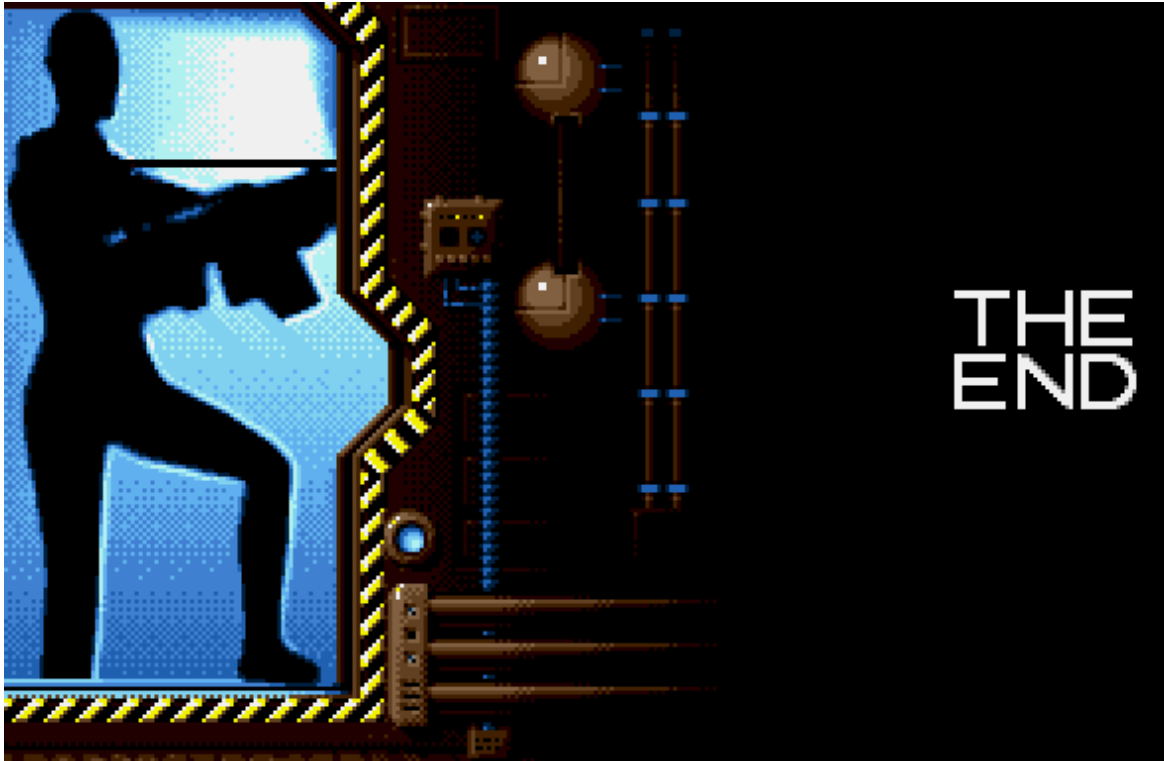
Andrews: This is Rumor Control. Here are the facts!

All this prisoner-saving malarkey is largely irrelevant in the movie since the queen only needs one host and she's already been chosen. No-one is glued to the wall like a fly caught in a spider's web awaiting lunchtime, that's a throwback to the first two films.

Ripley: You've been in my life so long, I can't remember anything else.



We're informed in the manual that 'The Company' are on route to confiscate the alien and likely quarantine Ripley, though this ultimately plays no part in proceedings. It's as though the various factions of the development team were working in isolation and forgot to share their notes. No further exposition features in the game until the final curtain call, missing an opportunity to sweep these plot holes under the rug.



"No, the whole game seems as though it has been rushed out to meet a tight deadline, which is a shame because with a relatively small amount of work it could have been a great shoot-em-up. There is a good game in here somewhere, but faced with the lack of variety, sound and overall atmosphere, it just won't leap out and grab you..."

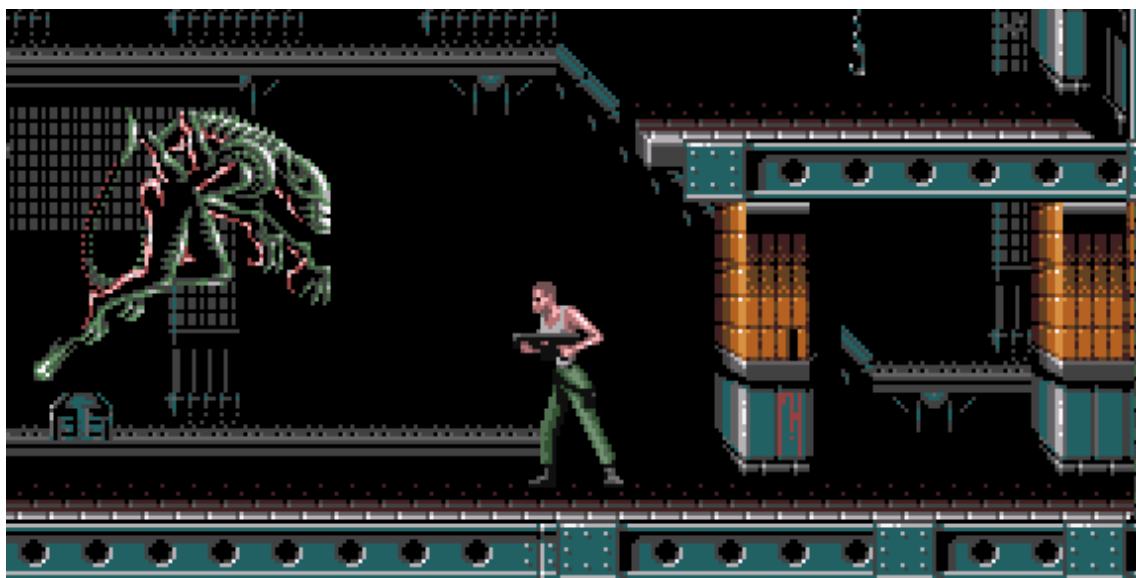
"A strange choice of game for the Alien 3 license - an atmospheric graphic or arcade adventure would have been better. A reasonably good 'feel' when moving Ripley around. Some nice powerful weapons to shoot the bitch with. Nob music, which you can switch off in favour of the OK, but sparse, sound effects."

Amiga Format (70%, April 1993)



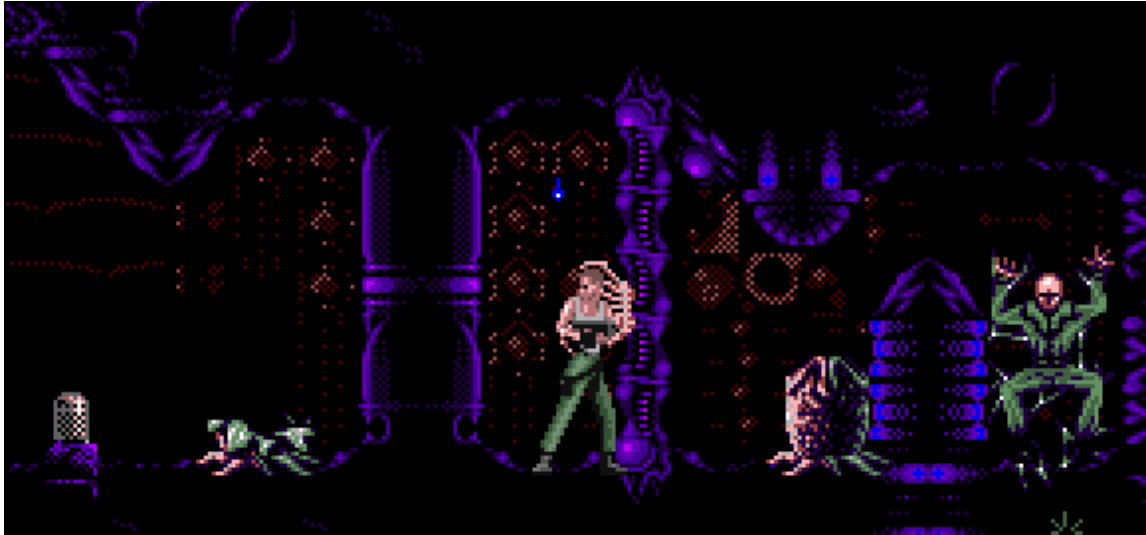
David: Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!

At the end of each stage, Ripley squares up to a bipedal guardian bitch (that's a technical term, honest) that doesn't look or behave vastly superior to the common or garden variety that crawl on all fours. Is it racist to say that they all look the same? Never mind; alien corpses can't file a complaint with the space authorities.



Guardian or not, all hurtle by at the speed of light with no warning that they're about to appear. Well, except for the blips on the battery-powered motion detector that must be periodically recharged to keep it active. We don't have time to monitor this in the heat of the battle so it's about as much use as a chocolate teapot for keeping tabs on the enemy. Still quite handy as a prisoner divining rod though, what with them not being so agile.

In-between boss clashes we must destroy each and every alien egg to break the life-cycle. Clamber up and down ladders if we can clamp ourselves to them in the first place, then dismount later if the God of Joystick Control permits. Remember the first rule of ladder etiquette - you can only climb on and off them from a solid platform.



Make sure you search every nook and cranny, blind-leaping into seemingly solid walls leading to secret areas. Crawl through tunnels or air ducts that only become visible once the edge of the screen is nudged, forcing it to scroll.



"They were one of the hardest parts of the game to implement. When Ripley submerges into the ducts you can't see anything outside as it's pitch black and when she's outside you can't see into the ducts. Finding a way of having this natural transition from a fairly well-lit scene to pitch darkness, without the player knowing what's coming next, was very hard to pull off."

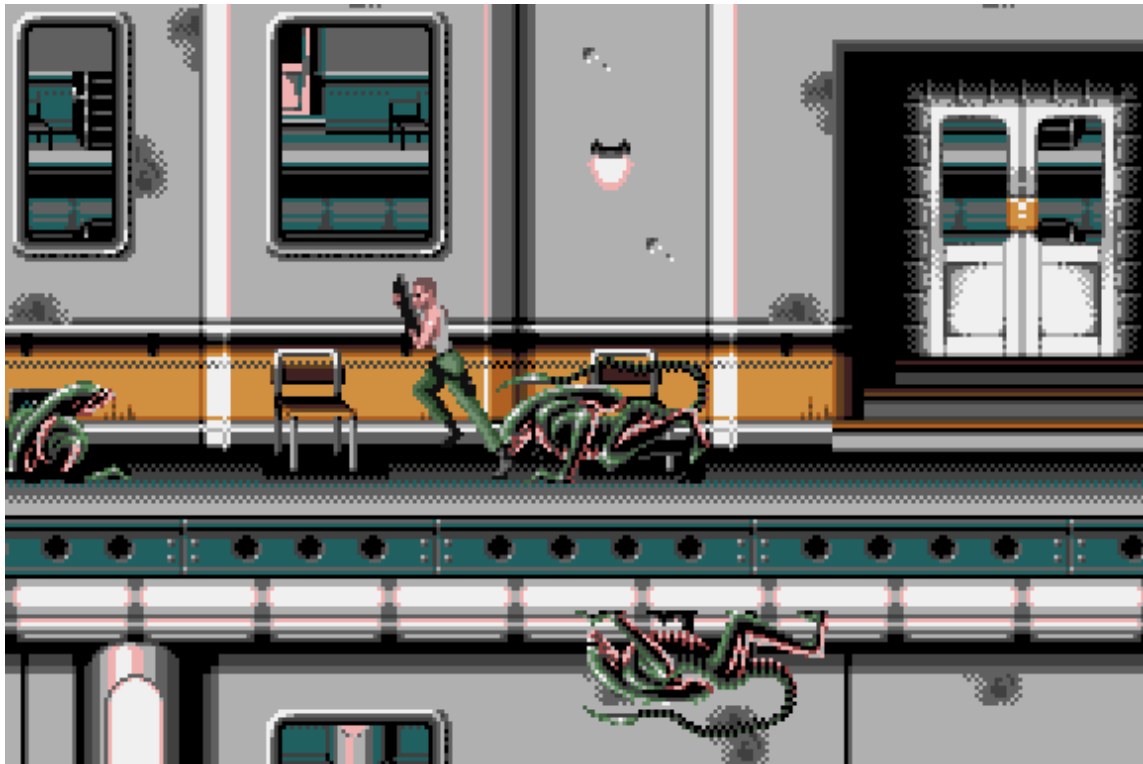
Probe coder, Tim Round (CU Amiga preview, September 1992)

Reminiscent of Switchblade, only much more nail-bitingly climactic, the erratic enemies raising the stakes to foster a sense of fervent turmoil.

"You can't really say that this does the film justice, mainly because most people will rate the game better than the movie. It also has so little to do with the movie's plot. What it is, though, is an excellent Aliens game. It's full of action and the variety of weapons offer Ripley plenty of death-dealing opportunities.

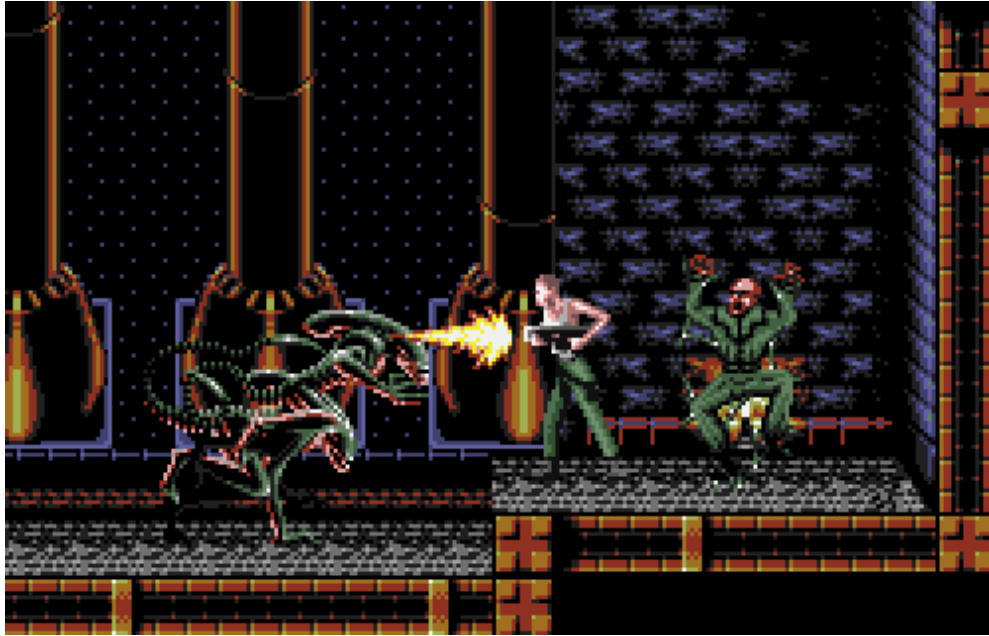
Alien 3 is definitely very challenging. There's plenty to shoot, lots to explore and the backgrounds vary enough to hold your attention. It has all the atmosphere of an Aliens film as you never know when one's going to leap out at you. This is one of the best movie-to-game conversions I've seen."

CU Amiga (92%, December 1992)



Four limited ammo weapons are at our disposal.

- Bouncing, delayed detonation hand grenades for sending shockwaves through confined spaces such as ventilation shafts, or clearing distant areas below before entering them.
- A slowly reloading long-range grenade launcher capable of "blowing the bloody doors off!".
- A versatile, rotatable M41A pulse rifle, ideal for aiming down ladders or picking off ceiling crawlers. Check out Ripley's muzzle flare illuminated face!



- And a close-range flame-thrower best reserved for occasions when it looks like the aliens intend to share our skin, or we fancy flame-grilled eggs for tea. If you're not quick enough get ready to waggle like a Daley Thompson grandmaster.



Like time, ammunitions and medi-pack supplies are tight, with replenishment often tricky to locate, even when they are perfectly visible. As with captives, knowing where power-ups are is no guarantee that we'll be able to reach them before the 'Jack in the Chest' triggers its ejector seat.



"Alien 3 may be unoriginal but in its favour there's nothing on the Amiga of a similar ilk that's as atmospheric and playable. The maze-like levels aren't huge but they're well designed and that makes them appear larger. (It's often easy to miss prisoners under your nose and to lose sight of the exit, which all adds to the tension).

You could certainly spend your hardly-earned Christmas cash on a lot worse, so don't. Buy Alien 3 and have a good time."

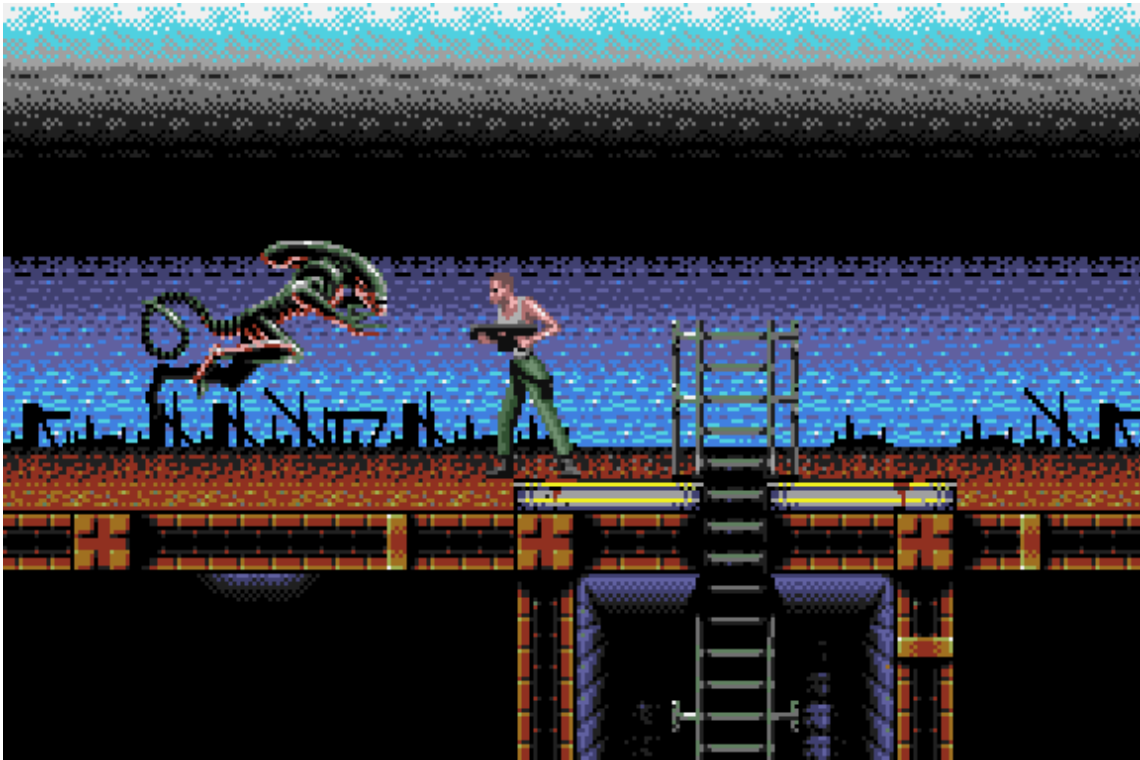
"Uppers: Surprisingly tense atmosphere at times. A good feel, too.

Downers: Limited ammunition stinks, but everything else smells of roses so that's not as big a downer as it might

have been.

The bottom line: A very good quality blast and a decent representation of the Alien films. Recommended."

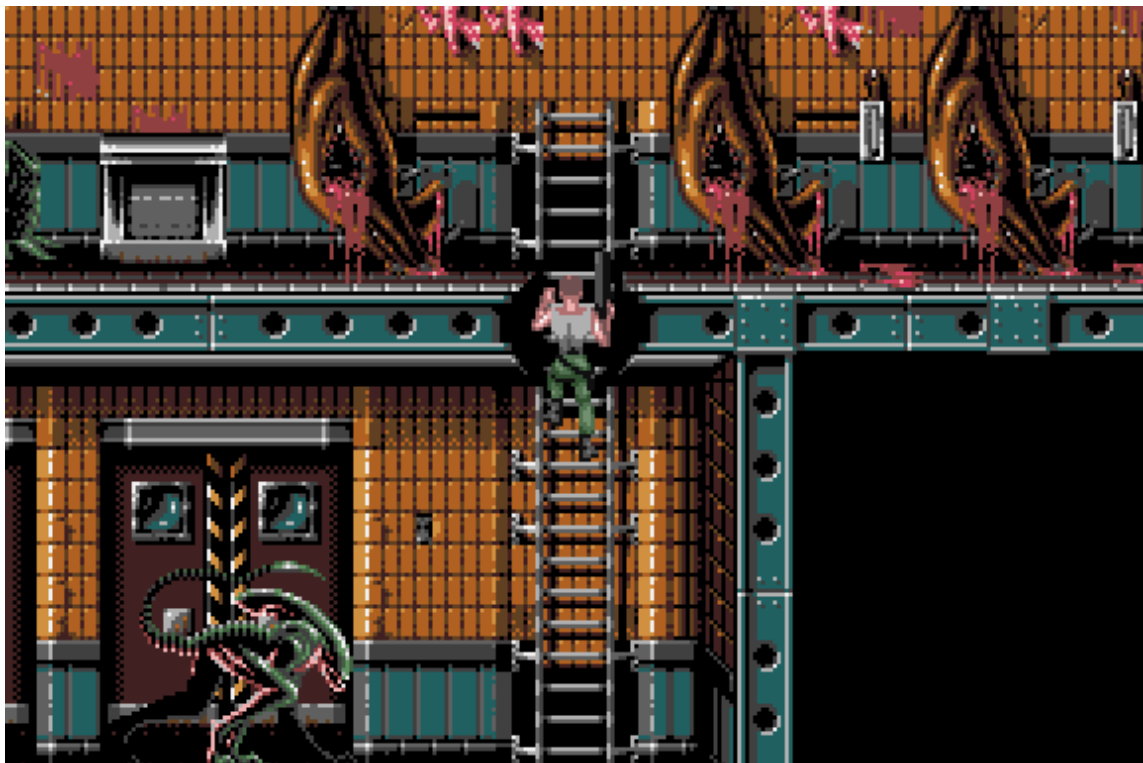
Amiga Power (85%, February 1993)



Number of levels differs depending on the port in question; the Amiga variant has 14 encompassing multiple trips through the hospital (more of a modest medical bay in the movie), abattoir, prison cell blocks, morgue, and lead foundry etc.

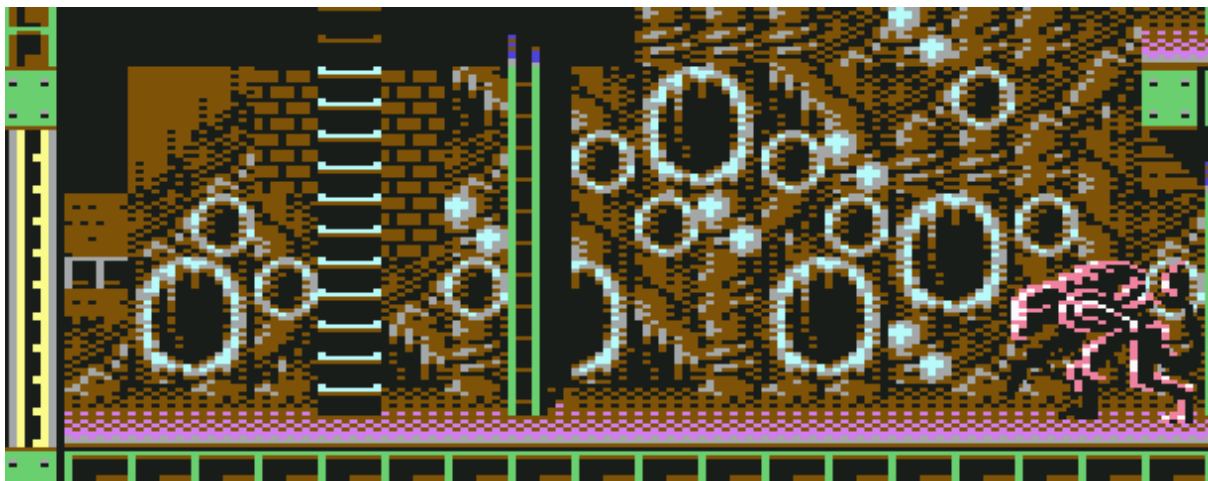


Expect to become very familiar with the earlier ones, never clapping eyes on most.

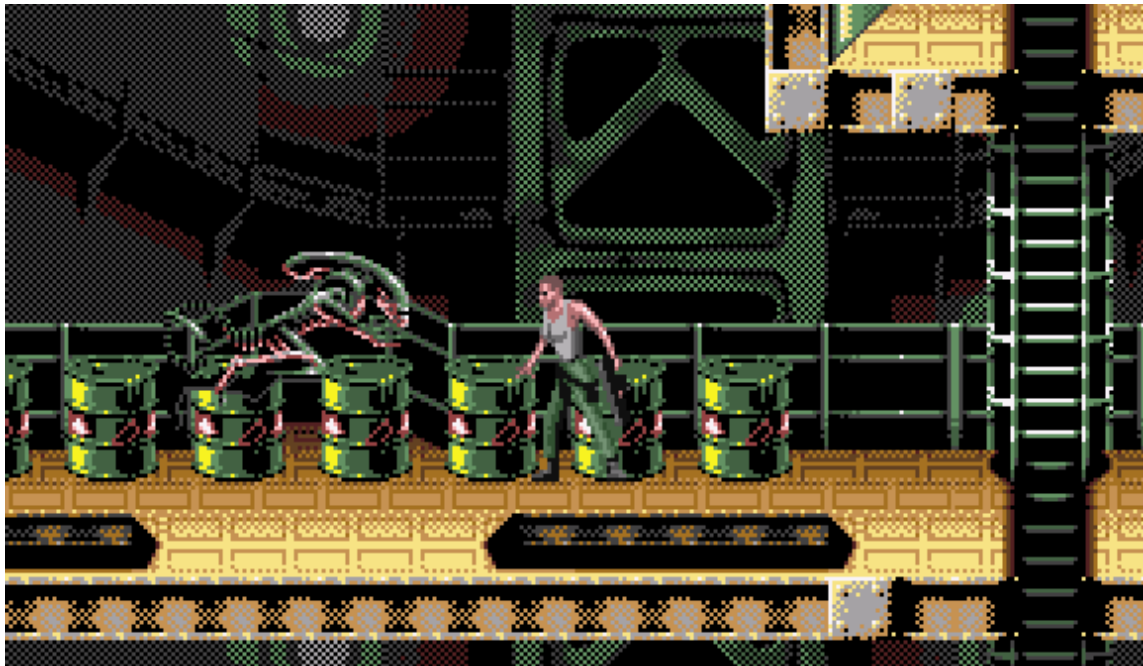


Frenetic enemy activity coupled with fall damage, spiked pits requiring near-impossible jumps over them, and the necessity to restart from scratch when we lose all our lives ensure that even the most battle-hardened gamers will struggle to reach the final stand-off with the alien queen. Don't expect passwords to save the day - there *aren't* any unless you happen to have been knocked unconscious by a rampaging xenomorph and woken up playing the SNES edition.

Should that be the case, take a moment to appreciate the simultaneous music and sound effects. It's not a bonus you'll get to enjoy on the Amiga, which is a shame since the spot effects are meaty samples snagged directly from the movie, whilst the music is mildly eerie and provocative in a bland sort of way. Naturally, the Mega Drive original offers both by default, just to taunt us Amigans.

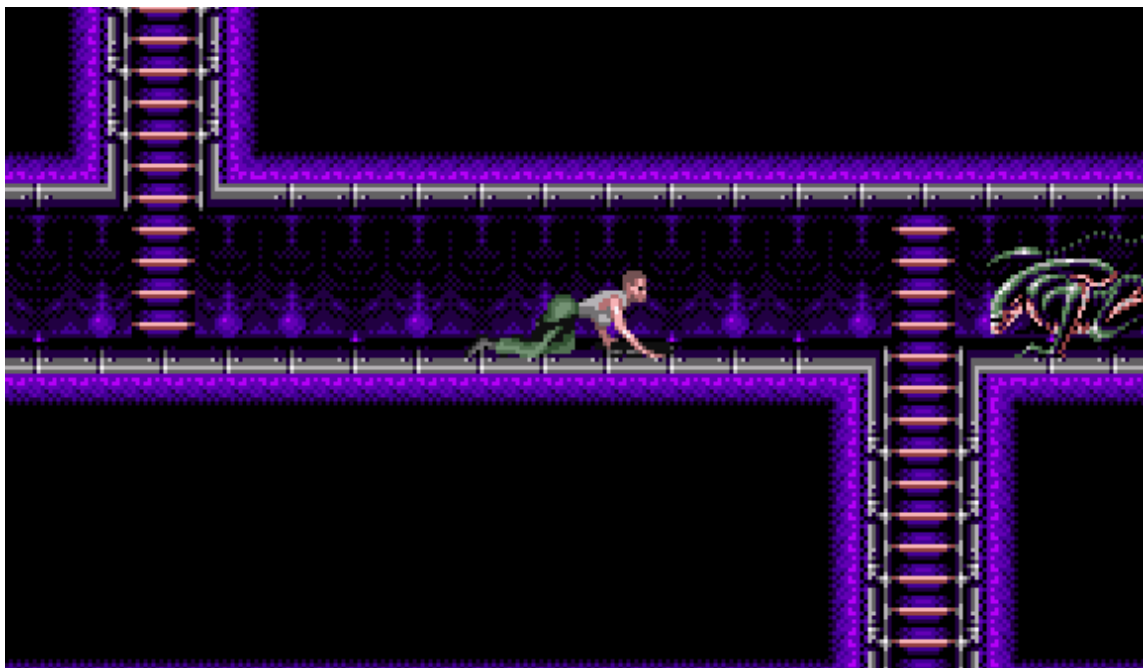


Whichever version you're playing, the final act remains the same and makes about as much sense. Ripley slaying the last of the queen aliens to safeguard the human race from an unrelentingly primaevial invasion, then walking off into the metaphorical sunset unscathed, is quite a deviation from the movie's denouement.



(Ripley and David are fetching Quintricityline for coating the prison tunnels)

David: I saw a drum of this stuff fall into a beachhead bunker once. The blast put a tug in dry dock for seventeen weeks. Great stuff!



Toxic waste pyrotechnics tried and failed, the alien queen is instead lured to the foundry's moulding facility. There it's securely sequestered inside, then immersed in molten lead. Still writhing, the beast is rapidly cooled with water emitted from the sprinkler system causing it to freeze. Once immobilised the statue is shattered like a certain mercury man who went on to borrow Fox Mulder's shoes.



Ripley: We waste this thing, then you take care of me.

Dillon: No problem. Quick, easy and painless!



Ripley: I'm staying!

Dillon: Bulls**t! There's gonna be ten tons of hot lead in here!

Ripley: I keep telling you I want to die!

Dillon: (Dillon grabs Ripley from behind) We got a deal, remember? It dies first, *then* you! I'm not gonna move without you! Now get going!

Still irrecoverably infected with a chest-bursting embryo, Ripley commits suicide by falling backwards into the foundry's blazing furnace, ensuring the extraterrestrial outbreak is finally extinguished. At least until next time.



Bishop II: Ripley! Think of all we could learn from it! It's the chance of a lifetime, you must let me have it!

Not such a happy Hollywood ending despite Terminator II popularising the practice a year earlier. Still, Ripley sacrifices herself for the greater good, the survival of humankind, so doesn't die in vain. Make your life count you useless bum!

Preferably not by wasting it playing this infuriatingly repetitive, hysterically difficult game. Memorising the location of every prisoner and unseen-until-it's-too-late adversary through OCD levels of trial and error restarts is the only way to beat it. Well, the *only* way except for the *other* way; downloading an annotated map of each level. In the end, you'll be able to do it on autopilot... from your home for the infirm.

Clemens: It might be better if I left. I find you unpleasant to be around.



The Big Question is, can you really be bothered? Life's short and there are surely better games with which to while away our time. Save the world today and it'll only be decimated by some other undiscovered terror tomorrow. Why not commit your last hours on earth to giving your Sims unicorn a new hairdo? Any final words on the matter, Dillon?

Why? Why are the innocent punished? Why the sacrifice? Why the pain? There aren't any promises. Nothing certain. Only that some get called, some get saved. She won't ever know the hardship and grief for those of us left behind. We commit these bodies to the void with a glad heart. For within each seed, there is a promise of a flower, and within each death, no matter how small, there's always a new life. A new beginning. Amen.

